

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for collecting medical data regarding at least one patient for use in generating and maintaining confidential medical records related said at least one patient and information useful for research purposes, the method comprising the steps:

- a) generating confidential medical information related to said at least one patient, said confidential medical information being obtained by a healthcare provider;
- b) entering into a research agreement with said healthcare provider, said healthcare provider being obligated pursuant to the terms of such agreement to provide a portion of the information generated in step (a);
- c) editing said confidential information generated in step (a) such that said information becomes de-identified; and
- d) providing said de-identified information generated in step (c) to a recipient, said recipient being authorized to receive data pursuant to said research agreement entered into in step (b).

2. The method of Claim 1 wherein in step (a), said confidential medical information is collected utilizing electronic medical record software.

3. The method of Claim 2 wherein prior to step (a), said method comprises the steps:

- a) providing said healthcare provider with electronic medical record software operative to receive, store, retrieve, and transmit medical information related to said at least one patient.

4. The method of Claim 3 wherein said step of providing said healthcare provider with said electronic medical records software further comprises entering into a transaction with said healthcare provider to allow said healthcare provider access to utilize said electronic medical records software.

5. The method of Claim 1 wherein steps (a)-(d) are repeated on a routine basis.

6. The method of Claim 5 wherein steps (a)-(d) are repeated at least once per day.

7. The method of Claim 5 wherein steps (a)-(d) are repeated at least once per week.

8. The method of Claim 1 wherein step (c) comprises editing said confidential information such that all identifiers related to said at least one patient are removed therefrom.

9. The method of Claim 8 wherein said identifiers removed from said confidential medical information include information selected from the group consisting of said at least one

patient's name, said at least one patient's postal address information, said at least one patient's telephone number, said at least one patient's Social Security number, said at least one patient's medical record numbers, said at least one patient's health plan beneficiary numbers, said at least one patient's biometric identifiers, and images of said at least one patient.

10. The method of Claim 1 wherein step (c) comprises de-identifying said information in compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996.

11. The method of Claim 10 wherein said de-identification of data pursuant to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 generates a limited data set as defined by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996.

12. The method of Claim 1 wherein in step (b), said agreement specifies that said use of said portion of said data provided by said healthcare provider is for public health.

13. The method of Claim 1 wherein in step (b), said agreement specifies that said use of said portion of said data provided by said healthcare provider is for healthcare operations.

14. The method of Claim 3 wherein computer hardware operative to be utilized in connection with said electronic medical records software is also provided to said healthcare provider.

15. The method of Claim 1 wherein in step (a), said medical information compiled by said healthcare provider is stored in an electronic format in compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996.

16. The method of Claim 1 wherein step (a) further comprises generating information related to the use of prescription medications by said at least one patient, and utilizing a pharmaceutical distribution method for use in supplying medications to said at least one patient, said pharmaceutical distribution method comprising the steps:

- a) determining and confirming said at least one patient is in need of a prescription medication and generating a prescription for said at least one patient to obtain said medication;
- b) determining the lowest cost for which said medication prescribed in step (a) can be procured by said at least one patient, said determination comprising comparing the purchase price for said medication based upon procuring said medication from a source from within the United States, to the purchase price for said medication based upon procuring said medication from a source outside of the United States;

- c) procuring the lowest-cost medication identified in step (b);
- d) forwarding said medication procured in step (d) to said patient.

17. The method of Claim 16 wherein step (d) of said pharmaceutical distribution method comprises forwarding said medication via mail order.

18. The method of Claim 16 wherein step (a) of said pharmaceutical distribution method further comprises clinically evaluating said prescription to minimizes averse reactions potentially experienced by said at least one patient.